

## What are WE waiting for?

Rev. Gabi

Advent means coming: We are waiting for light; we are waiting for Peace.

Advent means coming:

In (*Isaiah 2:4*) we read that people always hoped for something to come. Listen:

*In earnest expectation, we pray for the days  
when the nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;*

*when nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Advent means coming: (*Psalm 85:10-11*) tells us the same.

Listen:

*In sincere anticipation, we hope for the time  
when love and faithfulness meet together,  
when righteousness and peace kiss each other,  
when faithfulness springs forth from the earth,  
and righteousness looks down from heaven.*

We Unitarian Universalists hope for something, too! And often, we gather in community, to wish and wait and pray together. But what exactly is it we are waiting for? I know that one thing everybody wants to come back is “Light”. The long weeks of late fall and winter make us all wait for the return of the light! Without light, nothing grows. Without lights, no work can be done outside. Without light, people have less energy and less fun, might become afflicted with SAD – the most fitting of all acronyms: seasonal affective disorder...In the old days, people put candles everywhere – these days, you can buy a “lightbox”.

But there is another way: you can become aware of the light you have within you! Yes, everybody who is alive has light in them. How bright it is depends entirely on you. You see, many things can dim your light: stress, grief, loneliness. But they can all be addressed; on your own or with the help of friends or your community.

The best recipe for doing it on your own is what I talked about last Sunday: the spiritual practice of gratitude. Negative “stuff” that dims your internal light can be polished away to brighten your internal light.

I speak from experience. Two years ago I served a congregation in Upper Michigan. I spent two winters there, with an average of 285 inches of snow, and 60 or 70 days in a row with temperatures below freezing.

At first, I loved the snow (I’m from the Alps, remember?), but eventually the long

darkness sucked me into melancholy. Thankfully, I had three wonderful interfaith colleagues who made me get out of my house and see the beauty everywhere. I also came to learn that because people were so isolated from each other because of the snow, they formed stronger communities. And, I have never met people who were friendlier and more helpful than the Michiganders! The gratitude for all this warmth and helpfulness brought my internal light back real fast.

Tess is now going to issue an invitation to you with words by James Morrison.

### **Your Glorious Light with the World**

*James Morrison*

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/benediction/share-your-glorious-light-world>

*Within each of our hearts there is a most glorious light.*

*Go forth, and let its spark help you understand what troubles both you and others;*

*Go forth, and let its light of reason be a guide in your decisions;*

*Go forth, and bring its ray of hope to those in need of help in both body and spirit, that they may find healing;*

*Go forth, and fan the flames of passion to help heal our world;*

*Go forth, and spread the warm glow of love, pushing back the darkness of the world;*

*Go forth, and share your glorious light with the world.*

Of course, you can also interpret the waiting for lights as the waiting for **enlightenment**... Don't we all hope and pray for that? But more about that later.

One of my all-time favorite theologians is Reinhold Niebuhr, and one of my favorites quotes by him is the following:

*"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love."*

So there are another few things we are probably waiting for, especially in "the year after": hope, faith, and love. I am sure that just like me, many of you have lost hope in this last year, or are close to losing it, right? Most of our hope and some of our fear have their root in the fact that everything changes. In the U.S., a lot of that seems to happen in November...The amazing thing is that when you look at the big picture, say history over a period of a hundred or 200 years, you will be amazed that things change regularly, albeit often unexpectedly. And most of those changes are not caused my magic major disasters, but by the cumulative effect of small acts of courage, of love, of commitment. Obviously, everything is always in motion. And sometimes, we are the movement. Things don't always work out just right, but overall, the Earth keeps turning, we keep muddling through.

I invite you to sit in silence for a few minutes, and ponder 2 questions: What are you hoping for? And – how can you give hope?  
You will then hear a poem by Barbara Kingsolver.

**“Hope; An Owner’s Manual”**

It is from Kingsolver’s commencement address at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, May 11, 2008.

*Look, you might as well know, this thing  
is going to take endless repair: rubber bands,  
crazy glue, tapioca, the square of the hypotenuse.  
Nineteenth century novels. Heartstrings, sunrise:  
all of these are useful. Also, feathers.*

*To keep it humming, sometimes you have to stand  
on an incline, where everything looks possible;  
on the line you drew yourself. Or in  
the grocery line, making faces at a toddler  
secretly, over his mother’s shoulder.*

*You might have to pop the clutch and run  
past all the evidence. Past everyone who is  
laughing or praying for you. Definitely you don’t  
want to go directly to jail, but still, here you go,  
passing time, passing strange. Don’t pass this up.*

*In the worst of times, you will have to pass it off.  
Park it and fly by the seat of your pants. With nothing  
in the bank, you’ll still want to take the express.  
Tiptoe past the dogs of the apocalypse that are sleeping  
in the shade of your future. Pay at the window.*

*Pass your hope like a bad check.  
You might still have just enough time.  
To make a deposit.*

“Hope; An Owner’s Manual” by Barbara Kingsolver

<https://lifeacousticandamplified.wordpress.com/2014/03/19/hope-an-owners-manual-by-barbara-kingsolver/>

Taken from “How to be Hopeful,” Kingsolver’s commencement address at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, May 11, 2008. Published online by Duke Today,

May 11, 2008. © Barbara Kingsolver.

The next thing Niebuhr mentions in his quote is “faith”. Now I know that some of you might not be in good relationship with this word, but give me a chance! All it means is “complete trust or confidence in someone or something”. Actually, you know when I heard the name Donald Trump for the first time? It was in 1993, during a sociology 101 class at the community college I attended. The professor stated that, “*everybody has faith. Everybody worships something. Even Donald Trump. He has faith in money, and he worships money...*” all I know about the guy at that time was that he was super rich, and that everyone I knew made fun of him.

Okay, change of topic. Let me say it again: “everybody has faith”. Everybody worships something. I think this is correct. Even for UUs! For many of us, the faith in the democratic system has been shattered last November, and yet we have found faith in the large number of folks being activated by this turn of events. And the fact that we are still here, and have not moved to Canada, or to Germany in my case; shows me that we also have faith in ourselves. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “*Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase*”. I think that describes most UUs. So often we have been taking the first step in an attempt to change, to improve what's wrong in the world. And I kind of believe that right now we might be waiting for a renewal of our faith in ourselves, our strengths, our resourcefulness, and the magic of the community. After all, according to Helen Keller “*Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light*”.

Let's spend another minute or two in reflection. Think about in what or whom you still have faith. Here is a quote from John Murray, Early American Universalist Minister: *Give the people something of your new vision. You may possess a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women. Give them not hell, but hope and courage...*

The last element Niebuhr mentions in his quote is love. We will be saved by love. For me, the most powerful savior! Somehow I think that everything that can possibly been said about love has already been said or written. Don't you agree? So today I am taking the easy way out and sharing with you the most poignant thoughts about love I could find.

*“Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we learn. The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and prejudices and the acceptance of love back in our hearts.”* — Marianne Williamson, probably America's most spiritual modern woman writer and activist.

*“The rejection of reason is cowardice and betrays a lack of faith.” “A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers*

*harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair.” - Abraham Joshua Heschel, Rabbi, early 20th century, Germany and Israel*

*“He who wants to do good knocks at the gate: he who loves finds the door open.”*  
Rabindranath Tagore, 19th century Hindu mystic and writer, India

*“Even after all this time,  
the sun never says to the earth,  
‘You owe me.’  
Look what happens with a love like that.  
It lights the whole sky.”*  
Hafiz, 14th century mystical Muslim poet from India

*“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”*

Lao Tzu, 6th century BC, philosopher, China

I would like to close this collection of quotes with the 2010 Statement of Peacemaking created by the UUA:

*“We believe in the transforming power of love. We affirm the reality of love as a dynamic power within and among us. This power moves us to create relationships of compassion, respect, mutuality, and forgiveness; to love our neighbor; and to recognize everyone as our neighbor. We are answering the call of love when we work for peace”.*

UUA 2010 Peacemaking document,

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/socialjustice/statements/13394.shtml>